

United States Government monitoring of foreign radio broadcasts had its somewhat confused and uncertain beginnings in 1941.

The aim was the development, on a world-wide basis, of a systematic operation to provide the government with the substantial amount of intelligence information believed to be expeditiously derivable from foreign broadcasts.

Yet at the outset there was almost no guide or familiar precedent for such an undertaking. The magnitude of the problem was only vaguely understood. Its technical aspects had been only tentatively explored, and those mainly from an engineering standpoint. Experienced personnel had yet to be developed.

It is true that the British had established a monitoring post during the 1930's, that a "listening post" dealing with a limited segment of foreign broadcasts had been established at Princeton University, that engineers of the Federal Communications Commission were recording domestic foreign-language programs in the Fall of 1940 and that this operation had been expanded in January 1941 to include certain foreign radio broad-

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casts beamed to the United States. By this time, also, news agencies and several newspapers in this country were regularly listening to a limited segment of foreign broadcasts for news-gathering purposes.

Yet the ground to be covered was almost entirely terra incognita when, in December 1940 the Department of State informally suggested to President Roosevelt that a monitoring system should be established by the Government. The question was brought before the Board of War Communications on 3 January 1941, and on 13 January the Board directed the Federal Communications Commission to present plans for establishing "listening posts." The plans were approved by the Board on 21 January, and on 25 February the President allocated \$150,000 to the FCC for monitoring purposes. The next day the FCC formally authorized the establishment of the Foreign Broadcast Monitoring Service, to which the Commission turned over the staff of translators and the facilities it had been employing on its limited monitoring operation. Further translators and other personnel were recruited under auspices of the parent agency, and in June 1941 [REDACTED] was appointed first Director of the STATINTL FMS.

The year 1941 was one of trial and error, experiment and extemporization. Gradually the operation took on form and outline so that by the end of the year--which brought the immense stimulation^{us} of Pearl Harbor and the entrance of the United States into the war--an embryonic system had emerged, the main features of which were to become permanent fixtures. Broadcasts were being audited, mechanically recorded, and translated. Certain portions of the derived information were being disseminated to U.S. Government Departments and agencies. Analytical work was being performed in an attempt to integrate broadcast information into the national intelligence picture, including counter-propaganda.

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The first reports published by the rather amorphous staff of analysts and editors were on a topical basis, issued in summarized "highlight" form. After continuous experimentation with various forms of publications, it became apparent that a daily, textual report of foreign broadcasts was essential, apart from the topical, analytical summaries. Finally, on 18 November 1941, the various publications were combined and published under the title of Daily Report of Foreign Radio Broadcasts. Analytical work was put in the hands of a separate Analysis Division which concentrated on weekly reports on propaganda trends and highlights. As it finally evolved, the Report Section was responsible for both the Daily Reports and the Wire Section, an ideal combination from the editorial and communications standpoints.

Material in the Daily Report was arranged on a transmitter basis, and the whole report consisted of three sections, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and the Far East, combined under one cover. The early reports contained "highlights" of important broadcasts, later replaced by daily roundups of European and Japanese propaganda. In September 1945 the report was broken

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up into three separate volumes, covering European, Latin American, and Far Eastern areas.

During the wartime years ^MFBIS operated four main listening posts



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The operations of the FBIS can be compared to a "beltline" process, with the material monitored and recorded at ~~these~~ field stations, translated, given a preliminary editing, and filed to the Washington headquarters, where the pertinent items were disseminated in a matter of hours by way of the Daily Reports, the wire service, and in the form of analyses. The FBIS performed its work as a disinterested service agency for other government units, and, as the sole government monitoring agency, ^{ed}listening to everything that could be heard at its reception posts, putting it into usable form, and passing the material on to its "clients," the operating war agencies. It had nothing to do with the releasing of information to the public or with broadcasting to foreign countries. That job was performed by the Office of War Information. This "beltline" process may

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be described in terms of the following successive or simultaneous steps:

1. Scheduling
2. Interception
3. Monitoring and
4. Recording (simultaneously)
5. Translating
6. Wire Service dissemination
7. Reports (Edited and mimeographed documents for intelligence dissemination)
8. Analyses
9. Individual services of various kinds (including Liaison). (TAB)

The problem of transmitting monitored material from the field to headquarters for processing and further dissemination was a basic one. Timely delivery of the output of monitoring station to the headquarters editorial staff has always depended on rapid and dependable communications. The ability to handle a large volume of traffic has usually been a priority requirement. The types of communications and the services or concerns handling the communications requirements of the FBIS have varied greatly, but the main traffic connections have been by way of leased land lines, leased teletype lines, and the U. S. Army Signal Corps facilities, *with the latter carrying the major share of the load.* (TAB)

During the war years, the FBIS operated six teletype circuits outgoing, each with a specific function (TAB), and in this period the Daily Report reached a circulation of 800 copies delivered to other

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agencies. This fluctuated from time to time due to budgetary trimming, or the addition or deletion of agencies on the mailing list (TAB)

Physically, the operations were patterned on newspaper or news-gathering agency practice, the FBIS editors working in much the same manner as their newspaper opposites. Thus, the Chief Editor had the functions of a Managing Editor, the heads of sections the responsibilities of section editors on a newspaper, and the wire editors had much the same duties as do newspaper cable and telegraph editors.

All material received from the field stations came into the wire desk, where copies were distributed for wire, Daily Report, and Analysis use. The outgoing FBIS wires handled timely material which was required immediately by agencies engaged in prosecution of the war effort, those in constant need of intelligence material which would affect United States policy and operations, those whose duty it was to counter enemy propaganda. The Daily Report consisted of a compiled, orderly, indexed publication of an entire day's output. The wire service provided a minute-by-minute coverage.

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Just as the Daily Report and wire service, through experimentation, gradually assumed the shape in which they now appear, the Analysis Division followed the same pattern of expansion and contraction as the occasion demanded. Thus, during 1942, there ^{were} ~~were~~ a maximum number of [REDACTED] persons in the division; as the result of budgetary allotments being decreased after Congressional scrutiny in 1943, the quantity of output was reduced; ~~IN~~ the Spring of 1944, as the result of these pressures the division as such was dissolved. The Far Eastern section of the Analysis Division was absorbed by the Daily Report.

The process of analysis, as applied in the division, was to categorize broadcasts as to general topic, origin of broadcast, or propaganda themes, and then put the end product in the form of a summarized report. Supplementing this process was a quantitative analysis showing graphically the amount of time devoted to a given topic or topics.

In addition to these regular FBIS services, throughout the war the agency provided additional services for other agencies. During the [REDACTED] Conference in April, 1945, for example, editors in

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ference, as delineated by radio broadcasts. This material was sent by teletype daily to [REDACTED] for the delegates' benefit. Another noteworthy special service was that concerned with prisoners of war. In December 1942, at the request of the Department of War, FBIS inaugurated a wire service to the Office of the Provost Marshal General, carrying the list of Allied prisoners mentioned in Axis broadcasts, a feature carried until the end of the war in Europe in 1945. Similarly, the names of captured airmen were sent to the Army Air Forces in London.

Section B

With the end of the war, the future of FBIS, established as a war-time organization, became a matter of concern. It seemed obvious to officials of the FCC that the continued monitoring of radio broadcasts--other than for the purpose of policing the air waves to prevent "outlaws" from operating in this country and to see that frequencies assigned by the commission were not misused--was not within the purview of the FCC and the continuing function of FBIS under the auspices of FCC was felt to be undesirable. Accordingly, it was decided to disband the organization.

However, the need of systematic foreign radio monitoring had been so convincing a reason for the establishment of FBIS in 1941, and in 1942, feeling

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that serious harm would be done by abandoning such monitoring, cast about for a means of continuing FBIS and in January 1946 the War Department took over FBIS on a caretaker basis. The functions of FBIS continued as before, with the same personnel and much the same autonomy. One change of importance was registered; the revision of the mailing list of the Daily Report and of wire service consumers to confine recipients of the material to legitimate Government intelligence and information agencies and to bring under strict control the distribution to extra-governmental news agencies.

With the establishment of the Central Intelligence Group, control of FBIS functions became its concern, and on 3 November 1946 all FBIS personnel was transferred to it. At the same time, the name of the organization was officially changed to Foreign Broadcast Information Service. In this early period FBIS activities outside of the continental United States were handled administratively by the War Department, which continued to service FBIS subject to reimbursement by CIG (TAB -- Sec. War Patterson). (NSCID #1)

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